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Eating in Israel. By: Kowalski, Kathiann M.. Faces (07491387), Dec2004, Vol. 21 Issue 4, p29-31, 3p, 1 color; Abstract: The article presents information about foods and eating habits in Israel. Since Israeli people came from around the world, its cuisine reflects many tastes and traditions. Ashkenazi Jewish people brought recipes from Europe. In Israel, Religion often guides menu choices. Orthodox Jewish people "keep kosher," meaning they follow strict rules on what to eat and how to prepare it. Breakfast on a kibbutz (large, communal farm) is typically a huge spread with fruit, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, and bread. While lunch is often the main meal of the day. It contains spread of appetizers might feature vegetables with dips, spinach-filled pastries, or spicy relishes. Reading Level (Lexile): 960; (AN 15221008)

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**Eating in Israel**

Eat in Israel, and you will have many menu choices. Because Israeli people came from around the world, its cuisine reflects many tastes and traditions. Sephardic Jewish people from the Middle East and North Africa eat many traditional Arab foods, as do native Palestinians. Pitas (flat pocket breads) are popular, along with hummus (chickpea dip) and baba ghanooj (eggplant dip, pronounced BAH-bah gaNOOSH). Tabouleh (tah-BOO-lih) is a cracked wheat salad.

Ashkenazi Jewish people brought recipes from Europe. Eastern European Jews enjoy gefilte [ge-FILL-teh] fish. Greek Jews enjoy stuffed grape leaves. Russian Jews make borscht (beet soup). Immigrants from India and other Asian countries brought favorite recipes, too.

Thanks to the mild climate, fresh fruits and vegetables abound in the "land of milk and honey." (In the book of Exodus in the Bible, Israel is described as the "land of milk and honey," meaning that the land would be fertile and the people would have all they needed.) They include olives, figs, dates, pomegranates, grapes, oranges, melons, and more. Wheat and barley make bread, cereals, and pasta. Fresh fish include tilapia, mullet, and carp.

Religion often guides menu choices. Orthodox Jewish people "keep kosher," meaning they follow strict rules on what to eat and how to prepare it. For example, they never mix meat and dairy. Neither strict Jews nor Muslims eat pork either. Jews, Muslims, and Christians all have days of fasting, too.

Breakfast on a kibbutz (large, communal farm) is typically a huge spread with fruit, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, and bread. In the city, breakfast might be a pita with olive oil and za'atar (a spice mixture with oregano, pronounced ZAhtar). Egg dishes, bakery breads, and cheese are other choices.

Lunch is often the main meal of the day. A spread of appetizers might feature vegetables with dips, spinach-filled pastries, or spicy relishes. Chicken or lamb makes a hearty entrée. Vegetable side dishes might be squash, eggplant, or salad. Supper is usually a lighter meal, perhaps fish and a salad.

Street markets feature tasty fare. Vendors sell stuffed pitas, bagels, falafel [fehLAFF-el] (chickpea veggie burgers), and brik (cheese or potato-filled triangle pastries). Or, they may offer watermelon, grapes, or oranges. Tamarindi (TAM-ahrind-ee) is a syrupy beverage made from the tamarind fruit.

Israelis enjoy desserts, too. Fruit and fruit ices are refreshing. Cookies, cakes, custards, and pastries are popular as well.

Sabbath meals need special planning because strict Jewish people don't work that day. For Saturday's main meal, families often enjoy slow-cooked stews that can be prepared ahead on Friday.

Special holidays feature special foods. For Passover, the Jewish seder features lamb, matzo (flat, cracker-like bread), hard-boiled eggs, and haroset (ha-ROHset) (see recipe). Latkes (potato pancakes) are a favorite for Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights. "Haman's pockets" are Purim cookies.

Israel's food reflects the country's resources, its people's religious traditions, and their ethnic heritage. Combined with Israeli hospitality, it adds up to a wealth of wonderful eating experiences.

Sabbath is the day of rest and worship. In the Jewish faith, the Sabbath is observed on Saturday.

PHOTO (COLOR): This is not your average bagel. A vendor sells sesame bread from his cart in Jerusalem.

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